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19
In 3 Hh
Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, May 14 or later

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SUBJECT: "Homemaking in Colonial Days." Program based on article in the Home Economist (April 1928) by Edith Claxton, Instructor in Household Management Eastside High School, Paterson, N. J. Menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Bulletins available:

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We're going visiting today. We shall take Father Time by his long white beard, and gently turn him backward, to the early Colonial period, so we can spend the week-end with Grandmother Johnson.

We'll be surprised at some of the things in Grandmother Johnson's kitchen but not half so surprised, I think, as she would be, if she came to visit us. Take her kitchen equipment, for instance -- no range, no coal; no electricity, no gas, nor even kerosene, for light; no clock to tell the time of day; no match to light her fire or candle. Her table was set with wooden or pewter utensils, and with dishes made from gourds. Of course this was in the early part of the Colonial period. Later on, the more fortunate housewives had silver, and some china, greatly prized, and often mended.

Now just imagine, if you can, having to make your own soap, and candles; to card the wool, and spin the flax, for every article of personal or household use. Think you could do it?

Well, here we go, to Grandmother Johnson's. Let's pretend we arrive on a cold Friday evening, to be ready for our visit early Saturday morning. When Grandmother Johnson arises, early on Saturday morning, her first duty is to start a fire. She must start a fire before she washes her hands and face, because all the water in the house has frozen during the night. In the open fireplace, the coals on the hearth have been carefully covered, to keep them alive. Grandmother rakes off the ashes from these coals; lays on them shavings and bits of bark, and a few sticks. When the fire is burning brightly, she calls the rest of the family.

What would happen, if the fire went out, during the night? In that event, one of the boys might have to go to the nearest neighbor, probably a mile away, for a shovel of coals, carefully covered with ashes, to keep them alive. Quite a chore, for a hungry boy, on a zero morning.

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Now Grandmother's fire is blazing gloriously, and it's time for the old white horse, driven by the hired man, to bring in the great back log for the day. When the log is in place, the hired man drives the horse on through the kitchen, and out by the opposite door. Fancy that, in your modern kitchen!

Already breakfast is steaming on the table. And what do we have for breakfast? A huge bowl of "pudding" made of Indian corn. This was cooked in an iron kettle, hung from the crane, by hooks.

When breakfast is over, Grandmother cleans up the breakfast things, with soap of her own making. Then she sweeps the floor, scrubs it, and sands it. This is done every day. Since this is Saturday, Grandmother must see to the baking. The great brick oven, on one side of the fireplace, is filled with brush and light wood. For an hour, this fire is kept burning brightly. Then the coals and ashes are raked out. In the meantime, Grandmother has been busy combining Indian meal, eggs, butter, and milk. Into the oven go pans of bread, apple pudding, and "Injun" pudding. At the same time, smaller products are baking in the metal Dutch ovens, which stand on the hearth. After while, apple pies, mince pies, and squash pies will be baked in the big oven.

As dinner time approaches, meat or poultry is placed on the "spit" to roast. If she has no clock, how does Grandmother Johnson know it is noon? By the "noon marks" on the floor. One of these marks shows just where the sun stops in its travel across the kitchen floor; when the sun reaches this mark it is noon.

What are we going to have for dinner today? Deermeat pie, plenty of corn cake, a fine bowl of pot cheese, and for dessert, a "Washington pie." By the way, you notice that the children stand at table, during dinner. Not as a punishment, but that they may learn a proper respect and reverence for their elders. I wonder how the "younger generation" of 1928 would take to this custom.

After the noon meal, we spend a leisurely afternoon with Grandmother Johnson, while she spins, and chats with us. Before we know it, "candle lighting" time is here. Since we are company, Grandmother has invited in her friends and neighbors, to have tea with us.

I'm not sure what Grandmother Johnson would have for tea, but I know it would be a sumptuous meal. Perhaps it was something like the tea Washington Irving described, in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." "Such heaped-up platters of cakes of various and almost indescribable kinds. . . There were doughnuts, crullers, sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. And then there were apple pies and peach pies and pumpkin pies; besides slices of ham and smoked beef; and moreover, delectable dishes of preserved plums, and peaches, and pears, and quinces; not to mention broiled shad, and roasted chickens; together with bowls of milk and cream. . ."

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That's the meal which Washington Irving described, and what a meal it was!

Now I think it's time for you and me to thank Grandmother Johnson for her hospitality, and quietly slip out of the picture. We had a nice time, but we're glad to be home again, are we not? Let those who will, long for "the good old days." I prefer my modern kitchen, with its running water, gas stove, and electric lights. And I much prefer modern meals, to the one Washington Irving described in his "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

If you're ready to write it down, I'll give you one of the Menu Specialist's supper or lunch suggestions: Asparagus on Toast, with Hollandaise Sauce; Graham Muffins; Strawberry Jam; and Cocoa.

The recipe for Hollandaise Sauce is in the Radio Cookbook, on page 61, and I'm sure you'd rather refer to the cookbook, than write the recipe again. If you do not have a copy of the radio cookbook, now is the very best time to send for it.

I shan't tell you how to make Graham Muffins, either, because you probably know all about Graham Muffins, from A to Z.

Next on our list is Strawberry Jam. This recipe, also, is in the Radio Cookbook, but I think I'd better broadcast it, for those of you who have neglected to send for the cookbook. Besides, it's a very easy recipe to broadcast---only three ingredients, for a most delicious and delectable strawberry jam. These are the three ingredients:

4 quarts strawberries
3 pounds sugar, and
2 to 3 tablespoons lemon juice

Three ingredients, only:(Repeat)

Wash the berries, thoroughly. Then drain them, and cap them. Pick out the largest of the berries. Take about one quart of the smaller fruit, crush it, and add the sugar. Cook this rapidly, in an enameled saucepan, and stir until the sugar is dissolved, and a thick sirup is formed. Add the remainder of the fruit, and continue the rapid cooking, stirring frequently to prevent scorching. An asbestos mat should be placed under the pan as a precaution. Cook from 45 minutes to an hour, until fairly thick, then add the lemon juice. The jam should then have a brilliant red color, and some of the fresh flavor of the fruit. The jam thickens when cold, and should not be cooked down too much. Place the jam in sterilized jars, seal, and store.

To repeat the menu: Asparagus on Toast, with Hollandaise Sauce; Graham Muffins; Strawberry Jam; and Cocoa.

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Don't forget that the main point in cooking asparagus in any way, is to cook it quickly, so as not to destroy its delicate flavor, nor injure its vitamins.

Questions come next. I'll make the answer short and snappy, because I know you're too busy to listen to long discussions this morning.

First question: "Where can I find a reliable recipe for Parkerhouse rolls?"

Answer: In the Baking Bulletin. There are lots of recipes in the Baking Bulletin -- cakes, biscuits, doughnuts, griddle cakes, muffins, pie crust, bread, shortcake, and so forth. When you write for your copy of the Radio Cookbook, you might as well ask for the Baking Bulletin, too. The best things in life are free -- including the Radio Cookbook and the Baking Bulletin.

Second question: "What is the best way to seal jelly, so it will keep?"

Cover the jelly with paraffin. Put the paraffin into a cup, a small saucepan, or a small tin coffee pot. Melt it over low heat. After the jelly has cooled, and set, run the point of a knife lightly around the edge. Then pour hot paraffin over each glassful of jelly. See that it completely covers the top. Tilt the glass, so that the paraffin will run up on the sides of the glass lightly. This makes a perfect seal around the edge. After the paraffin cools, place tin tops on the glasses, or paste paper over them. Label the glasses neatly. Store them in a dry, cool, dark place.

I must mention the canning bulletin again. You'll find the answers to all canning questions in Dr. Stanley's bulletin, called "Canning Fruits and Vegetables at Home." You might as well ask for the canning bulletin, when you write for the cookbook and the baking bulletin. They are all free.

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